

# Good Eats for the soul

July 31, 2022 - **Lesson 6**  
Understanding NT Genres, part 1:  
Gospels & Acts (narrative)



When Washington was six years old he received a hatchet as a gift and damaged his father's cherry tree. When his father discovered what he had done, he became angry and confronted him. Young George bravely said, "I cannot tell a lie...I did cut it with my hatchet." Washington's father embraced him and rejoiced that his son's honesty was worth more than a thousand trees.

Mason L. Weems, *The Life of Washington the Great*

**I. Introduction:** *The story of George Washington chopping down his father's cherry tree*

Regarding facts, myths, and morals

**II. Overview of the Gospels**

A. What are they? (*euangelion*)

B. Two kinds

1. Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke

2. Gospel according to John: more thematic

**III. Acts of the Apostles**

A. Luke's second volume

B. Records the expansion of the Gospel

**IV. History or Theology?**

A. Danger of emphasizing history without theology: *can lead to justifying hatred, prejudice, racism, etc.*

B. Danger of emphasizing theology without history: *can lead to subjectivity, demystification, liberalism, etc.*

C. We need both working together

***What is being taught in churches and universities***

There are no outcasts from the love of God. That is what the Great Commission means. Its instructions continue. Baptize these others in the name of the "Father." That word must not be thought of as the name of some external deity, but rather as the name of the Source of Life that inhabits the universe, calling us all to live fully. Baptize, too, in the name of the "Son." That word must not be seen as the name of the founder of an exclusive religious system, but the name of the Source of Love, which embraces us all and then frees us to love wastefully, to love beyond every barrier. Baptize them in the name of the "Holy Spirit." Those two words are not another name for God, but are rather the name of the Ground of Being, in whom we all are related and in which we find not only the courage to be all that we can be, but also, perhaps even more important, the courage to allow others to be all that they can be in the infinite variety of our humanity. The human community contains people of all races, genders, sexual orientations, ages, political persuasions and economic statuses. The call of God to us to be all that we can be is also the call to rejoice in the very being of all others. That is what forms the universal community of which the church is but a symbol; indeed, to build the universal community is the ultimate goal of the Christian church, and in the achievement of that goal the church itself will finally be dissolved.

—John Shelby Spong, *Biblical Literalism: A Gentile Heresy*

**V. Approaching Gospels and Acts with preconceived beliefs**

- A. Self-help approach: These things are written for my benefit
  
- B. Moralistic approach: These things that are written weren't necessarily true, but they help us live better lives
  
- C. Religious (self-righteous) approach: I can make myself better by following these things that are written
  
- D. The proper approach
  - 1. The purpose of Matthew
  
  - 2. The purpose of Mark
  
  - 3. The purpose of Luke
  
  - 4. The purpose of John
  
  - 5. The purpose of Acts